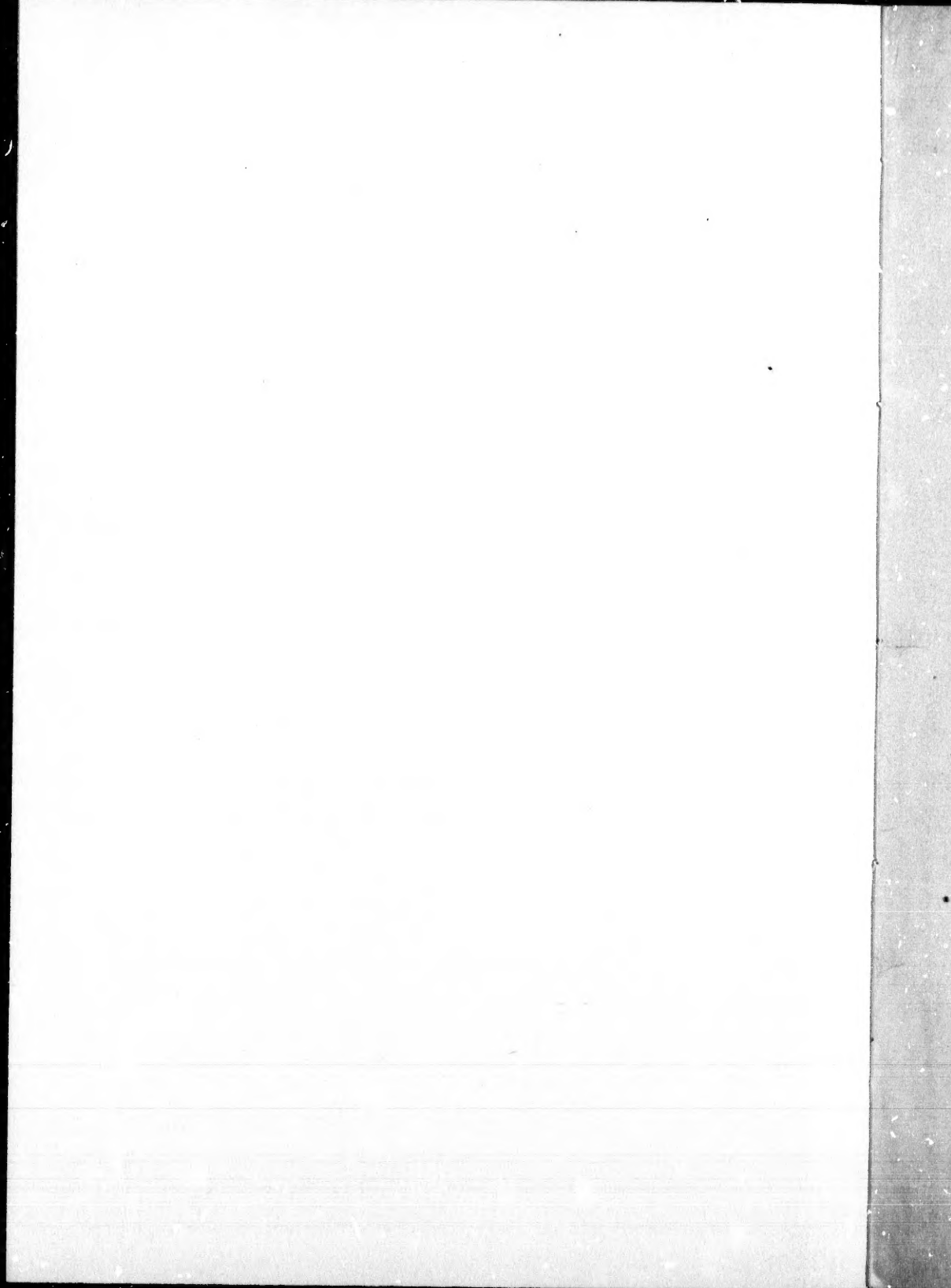




The Wentworth Pioneer and Historical Society

Held their first outing on the Stony Creek battle-ground, the 5th of June, 1889, to commemorate the 76th anniversary of that memorable battle, when quite one thousand ladies and gentlemen were present to greet them.

The President of the Association, Mr. Geo. H. Mills, in his opening address, cordially welcomed those present, and said he regarded the large assemblage, though the weather was not very auspicious, as a flattering indication that the objects of the Society received the hearty endorsement of the public. He lucidly described the objects of the Association, that the chief of these was the collection and preservation of materials for a truthful record of the historical events of this part of the country; to collect traditions that would prove valuable to future historians; to record with accuracy passing events, and thus aid in welding together a patriotic and distinctively Canadian national sentiment, that will enable us to hand down to our children unimpaired this grand inheritance, our country and our laws, as we received them from our forefathers who preserved them with heroic valor against great odds, when they were of immeasurably less value than they are now. Continuing, he said that the influence of Societies like this would go far towards strengthening a determination to maintain, continue, and even enlarge our affectionate relationship with the Mother Land, and this, said the speaker, is the only true course to be adopted, if we desire fulfilment of our aspirations, that Canada shall ultimately become a nation among nations; and if in the future the developments which time produced may render separation necessary, in order that Canada may take an independent place among the ruling powers of the earth, that separation will be sanctioned, but the ties of affection existing between this and our parent land will never be severed, and the new nation will carry with it in its constitution, the prestige of England's glory, and the abiding principles of Canadian liberty. (Applause.) He called upon the Hon. J. M. Gibson to address the audience.

The Hon. J. M. Gibson, when moving the first resolution, in a brilliant and exhaustive speech, recounted the history of the battle and clearly set forth the causes which led up to the war of 1812 and '13. He said: "I am sure we are all very much indebted to the Wentworth Pioneer and Historical Society, if for nothing else, at all events, for the opportunity they have to-day given us of assembling here and commemorating the anniversary of that well-known historical event—the battle of Stony Creek. I have often wondered that steps were not taken of a systematic description to do something in the way of commemo-

rating and rendering permanent the appreciation of the people of the valor of our ancestors who took part on that memorable occasion. I am not here by any means to-day in the character of an orator on this occasion; but I have been requested to move a resolution, and I do so with a great deal of pleasure. Around me on the platform and on the grounds are men well up in years, men from 50 to 100 years of age, some of whom, perhaps, were either present on that occasion, or, at all events, were so familiarly interested in the events in their childhood as to take a peculiar interest in the proceedings of to-day. Not only the elderly gentlemen, but the women of this district, their daughters and grand-daughters, are present, signifying their interest in what is now going on. It has been to me, sir, a matter of great interest since I came upon the ground to be able to shake hands with an elderly lady whose husband was present and took part in that memorable fight, the battle of Stony Creek." (Applause.) He referred to the battle of Lundy's Lane, one of the most pluckily fought engagements which ever took place in any country, and also one of the most sanguinary, as the records prove. Are we, the Canadians of to-day, he asked, ready to follow the examples of our forefathers in standing up for our country and in being prepared to shed our last drop of blood in defence of her interests? I sympathized with the remarks of the President. I am true to British connection, and I feel that it is entirely unnecessary for any one to stand on this platform and preach loyalty to the Mother Country, because if ever a loyal band of people were gathered together, they are before me now. (Applause.) Proceeding, he said, we are proud of the great empire of which we form a part, and while our sympathies will always be found in touch with the Motherland, it is right for us to have aspirations. Let us be proud of our country and endeavor to make it what it is destined to become—a great country—and in the same proportion as we show a resolution to depend upon ourselves will our Mother Country respect us and do for us all we can ask or expect to be done by our parent.

MR. F. W. FEARMAN'S REMARKS.

In seconding the resolution Mr. F. W. Fearman said: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen—I recognize and acknowledge the honor I partake of in being permitted to second this

resolution. I also recognize in the language of the resolution the fact that we to-day stand on almost sacred ground ; that we have assembled here to-day over the ashes of the heroes who 76 years ago to-day took their lives in their hands, and many of them gave them for their homes, families, King, constitution and country ; and they are in every sense entitled to our remembrance, gratitude, and what honor we can bestow upon their memories, if we can bestow on them a greater than to proclaim that they died for their country. We do not assemble here to-day to erect a Vendome obelisk, to commemorate the ravages of an ambitious Imperial tyrant, or an arch to perpetuate the robberies and rapine of a Roman scourge, but to endeavor to preserve the memories of the brave men who laid down their lives on this never to be forgotten soil on which we now stand, and to celebrate a victory which has proven most important to us Canadians who have succeeded them ; a victory which will not be erased from history in all time ; a victory that has very few equals ; a victory that has secured the home, the family and the country to the British-Canadian people, we trust for all time to come ; a victory that we now assemble to honor and commemorate, and leave in monumental condition, to be ever after held fresh in the love and memory of the Canadian people. We must acknowledge the neglect of years past, and regret that suitable care and attention have not been given to the memory of the brave and fallen heroes ; and I trust now that a suitable memento will be placed over their remains, and that at last we fulfil our duty. I know, sir, that old men live in the past and young men in the future, and I cannot refrain from drawing a picture of our country 76 years ago and comparing it with the nation of to-day. The night that these brave men, led by Vincent and Harvey, left the entrenchments on Burlington Heights (now Hamilton Cemetery), with arms unloaded, poorly fed, worse paid, half clothed, in the darkness of midnight, over a forest covered track—not one-third the number of the well-equipped foe who held possession of all the country east of this to the Niagara River ; who held possession of the strong points of this field ; who had penetrated almost to what are now the suburbs of the city of Hamilton, and that our matchless little army, with all its disadvantages, should succeed in defeating and destroying the enemy and in a very short time driving them from the face of Canadian soil. It is such recollections as these that lead us to value the memories of these men, and that inspire us to do them honor ; and while we look at the possessions, the comfort, prosperity and happiness insured to us by their heroic achievements, by their sacrifices, trials and death, we cannot but feel grateful as a people for all the blessings that Divine Providence has conferred upon us. When we look at this Canada of ours ; its wonderful advance among the nations of the world ; its increase in wealth, commerce, and comfort ; the educational advantages and religious tendencies of the people ; the great and rapid means of transit ; the vast extent of

territory claimed by the agriculturist from the prairie and forest, we can but wonder and marvel that all this has been done in so short a time. But so it is and so may it long continue ! The resolution refers to the moral and material support received in the past from the Mother Country. We acknowledge it most gratefully, and also acknowledge its influence on us and on our country ; and may the day be far distant when that influence will cease. While we here to-day celebrate the great event that saved this country from the grasp of an invading foe, let us not forget their dead. They lie here in the same graves. They sleep their last sleep side by side with the defenders of our country, and let us as Canadians, whether native born or adopted, remember that they were under orders and led, as they supposed by duty, to their sad end. May this, for all the future, be the last record of strife between us and our neighbors to the south. Let concord, peace, and progress forever reign, and the only contest be which can do the most for the happiness, cordiality and advancement of each other, and thereby benefit ourselves individually, and humanity as a whole. Let our motto be "Peace on earth, good will toward men," and with the poet we will say :

Cover them over with beautiful flowers,
Deck them with garlands, these brothers of ours,
Living so silent, by night and by day,
Sleeping the years of their manhood away ;
Years they had marked for the joys of the brave,
Years they must waste in the moldering grave.
All the bright laurels that waited to bloom
Fell from their hopes when they fell to the tomb.
Give them the meed they have won in the past,
Give them the honors the future forecast,
Give them the chaplets they won in the strife,
Give them the laurels they lost with their life.
Cover them over, yes, cover them over,
Parent and husband, brother and lover ;
Crown in your heart those dead heroes of ours,
And cover them over with beautiful flowers.

The motion was put and declared carried unanimously.

Mr. A. T. Freed was then called upon. He said : Permit me to say that I am very much pleased with the honor done me in being allowed to make a resolution. We in Canada have a history. We can look around us and say, on these fields our fathers fought and have handed down to us blessing. Let us prove that we are worthy sons of worthy sires. I feel we will not be faithful sons of worthy sires if we do not place upon the battle-field of Stony Creek something to mark and tell of the bravery of our fathers.

Mr. Peter S. VanWagner, a veteran, in seconding the resolution, said : The ground has been gone over so well that there is little for me to relate, yet I may allude to a few of the details which I learned when at school on the scene of the battle when I was a boy, only twelve years after the battle, when I and others used to pick up the bullets, bent bayonets and swords, and old rusty musket barrels about the battle field. At the time of the battle all the courage was not on our side. Oh, no ! Our big brother to the south was brave, too, and thought he would lick his little brother, but little Johnny Canuck was stub-

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born and wouldn't have it. It has often been wondered how the Americans came to be surprised. How did the British get the countersign? Why, it was like this. Mr. Peter Corman was taken prisoner by the Americans for not telling where the British were camped. He taffied up the soldiers who had him in charge, and they let him go, giving him the countersign to enable him to get home. He gave the countersign to William Green, a scout, who took it to the British. A council of war was held and a surprise arranged. As you know, it was successfully carried out, and the 700 British and Canadians routed the 3,000 or 3,500 Americans. We have just as good Canadian boys now as they had then (cheers), and should occasion ever offer I am sure they will prove themselves to be so. You will naturally ask, What signs remain of this important event to arrest the eye, to awaken the memory, to honor the dead, to arouse a country's gratitude, to stimulate our patriotism? Nought but those apple trees on the hill, which seem to stand sentry over what was once a long trench, in which forty, friend and foe, lie sleeping and waiting the last bugle call. To this date those apple trees, nourished by the mouldering bones of those who lie beneath the sod, are the only monument. For ourselves, we have carved not a line, we have raised not a stone, but we have left them alone in their glory. The band should play, "My Cottage by the Wood," for to this tune the brave boys marched away, and we should see to it that the spot where the battle was fought and won should be properly marked.

Major Glasgow was then called upon and read the following poem, written for the occasion by himself:

STONEY CREEK, JUNE 5TH, 1813 AND 1889.

The sun had set on yonder height
That heads Ontario's restless might;
The darkness of the summer night
Enshrouded the display
Where Britons brave, in one appeal,
With hearts as trusty as their steel,
Longed for the deadly fray.

Young Harvey's hand had grasped his sword—
The fear of death all there ignored;
Each hero heard the welcome word
Proud Vincent uttered low,
The signal heard, in British style
Had moved each sturdy rank and file
To seek the daring foe.

No ringing cheer in warlike mood
Awoke the inmates of the wood—
A silence that was understood
Pervaded every man;
The muffled guns no warning gave
To foemen that the gallant brave
Toiled at his secret plan.

Each heart was like a forge of fire,
Half smothered; yet the inner ire

Awoke a strain upon the lyre
That plays within the soul,
When foreign foes in fierce array,
Usurper like, seek to essay
Man's birthright to control.

The vaunting foe had thus designed
To force the fieldwork left behind.
But Harvey's nerve was of a kind
That brooked of no delay;
He waited not, but sought the stream,
Where the invader loved to dream
Of conquest and of prey.

But fancy's flight in dreams are tame
Compared with deeds by hearts aflame,
When love of flag and Britain's name
Are written on the shield.
For home and hearth and all that's dear
Make man a hero to appear
Upon the bloody field.

The little host with pluck for mail,
In haste marched down the gloomy trail—
With vanguard ready to assail
The foeman's camp in view;
Then shot and shell and bayonet keen,
Wrought havoc in the midnight scene
Where Stony Creek runs through.

Our gallant sires, with blood so warm,
Gave little time for foes to form—
The iron hail, a northern storm,
Sent many down to death;
And few there were who safely won
Their liberty to homeward run
From Britons in their wrath.

Thus Britons in their sternest night,
Will ever battle for the right.
Humanity would feel the plight
If fortune here should fail;
For liberty is still their word
Engraved on every freeman's sword,
Whoever may assail.

Oft has the seasons' ceaseless run
Enlivened June's sweet summer sun
Since this famed field was fairly won
By Harvey's little band.
Yet, many now are here to-day
Who, in their hearts will fondly say,
This is our own loved land.

In moving the third resolution Judge Jones said: I am thankful to you, Mr. President, to give me the opportunity to speak here and to see so many old friends of my former Stony Creek home. My earliest recollections are of my father telling me of Queenstown Heights and the battle of Stony Creek, the battle field being yet the property of my wife and highly prized on account of its history. Let us honor our forefathers for what they have done, and let us follow in their loyal example.

In seconding the motion Sheriff McKellar said he was pleased to be present. He congratulated the society upon its successful organization, and alluded to the men of the past who had made Canada what it is. It was to commemorate the deeds of the Canadian pioneers that the society was organized.

In compliance with the request of the Historical Society, the Council of the City of Hamilton has set apart a lot on Burlington Heights for the erection of a monument, commemorative of the Stony Creek battle.

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1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

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